

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #67, April 6-19, 2005

A **FREE** PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

DUANE WADDE



This War Won't Stop Itself

David Solnit talks "people power"

John Tarleton covers the counter-recruiters

Wishnia follows the anti-war movement uptown

p.8

Pontificating about the Pope

In this time of mourning for Pope John Paul II, we couldn't help but notice that some ink-stained wretches are heaping scorn on the holy Pontiff even before he was interred in the grotto under St. Peter's Basilica. We think it unseemly that our fellow journalists have marred this period of profound lamentation.

BY A.K. GUPTA

Take the London *Guardian*. It published Terry Eagleton's polemic "The Pope has blood on his hands," even as the multitudes wept. We would never suggest, as does Eagleton, that "John Paul II set about rolling back the liberal achievements of Vatican 2" or that he honored "Loopy far-right mystics" and fascist priests, no matter how true it may be.

Nor would we say that, "History will judge the Pope harshly," as do some, because "His opposition to the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV has contributed to millions of people dying an agonizing, needless death."

Out of respect for the Holy Father, we would not comment that "Pope John Paul II waged a ceaseless war against the

human rights of women and gay people; opposing the right of women to control their own fertility; blocking women's equality in the church; and endorsing state-sponsored discrimination against lesbians and gay men."

Others might, but not us.

We want to remember the Pope as someone who spoke out against poverty and war, and not speak of the fact that, "the Vatican has billions of dollars in solid gold in its coffers." After all, the Pope excoriated capitalism and neoliberalism, which should squelch the voices that proclaim because "the Church possesses more riches in real estate, property, stocks and shares than any other single institution," it could have wiped out poverty in deed, not just word.

We say to those who want to criticize the Pope to banish

thoughts that he was "a political and cultural reactionary to his core." After all, given that the Pope celebrated a culture of life, what does it matter if he endorsed a mass murderer for President in George W. Bush or warmly shook the hand of Chile's strongman, Augusto Pinochet? And even if he did want Terry Schiavo's life prolonged artificially against her will, it's of no significance that he rejected the same for himself.

Now is not the time to say that the Pope sidelined liberation theologians throughout Latin America, ones who actually put the Gospel into action by working to alleviate the suffering of the poor. What is the point in discussing now that John Paul II called on Archbishop Oscar Romero, just one month before he was assassinated in 1980, to work with the Salvadoran government while its death squads was slaughtering tens of thousands of people?

And it's beyond the pale to mention that a papacy which "allowed no latitude in its teachings on masturbation, premarital sex, birth control, and divorce" would promote Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston to a plum post in the Vatican after "his appalling collusion in the child-rape racket that his diocese had been running."

We would rather wish the Pope a happy afterlife, wherever he may be.



WOBLIES!

a cartoon history
p.15



Jesus Freaks

FREAK OUT!

the Schiavo
Subtext, p.7



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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 120 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Indypendent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Indypendent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

VOLUNTEER STAFF:

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

APRIL

THE INDYPENDENT

has open meetings every Tuesday at 7p.m. at 34 E. 29th St., 2nd floor.

FRI APRIL 8

6:00 - 7:30 p.m. • Free
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON FEMALE SEXUALITY.

Julia Kristeva offers a new vision of feminine sexuality based on a two phase oedipal complex.
Tishman Auditorium, 66 West 12th St.

8 p.m. • Free

MEETING: HOW THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM HAS FAILED LORI BERENSON
Hewlett-Woodmere Public Library
1125 Broadway
Hewlett, New York

SAT APRIL 9

10am - 6pm • \$30 for weekend
NYC GRASSROOTS MEDIA CONFERENCE

Join hundreds of more than 70 media makers and activists for panels, discussions, and hands-on workshops over two days.
New School University
65 5th Ave.
nyc.grassrootsmedia.org

SUN APRIL 10

2 P.M. • Free
MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR JOLIE RICKMAN
Brecht Forum, 451 West St.

TUES APRIL 12

7:00-9:00 p.m. • Free
PERFORMANCE AND SCREENING LAURIE ANDERSON, HERSELF
Laurie Anderson is recognized worldwide for her innovative and groundbreaking work with technologically vanguard instruments in the arts. As an artist with a vast collection of work, she has published six books, produced numerous videos, films and radio pieces, and created orchestral work.
Tishman Auditorium, 66 West 12th St.

WED APRIL 13

7 p.m. • Free
AN INTERVENTIONIST DISCUSSION ON DISSENT IN THE UNITED STATES
Moderated by Amy Goodman, with activist Tariq Ali, embattled Columbia professor Joseph Massad, Sara Roy and Monique Dols.
The Great Hall at The Cooper Union
7 East 7th Street

6:00 pm • \$6 with free drink
THE MONTHLY FLASH FICTION
Prose Poetry & Experimental Short Forms Series.
29 Cornelia St. in NYC.

THURS APRIL 14

6:30-8 p.m. • Free
BUSHWOMEN
Moderated by Karen Finley, With Martha Wilson, Founding Director of Franklin Furnace, as Barbara Bush.
The Cantor Film Center
New York University
36 East 8th Street
(between University and Mercer)
(212) 807 9680

6:00 to 7:00p.m. • Free
FREE SCREENWRITING WORKSHOP WITH JOHN KROKIDAS
Join screenwriter John Krokidas in a free one-hour screenwriting workshop. Participants are advised to bring paper, pen, and a desire to write for the silver screen.
The Drama Book Shop
250 West 40th Street

SAT APRIL 16

8:35 AM • \$10 (one way)
SPRING HIKE
Hike to Mt. Taurus in Cold Spring, NY. This 5-hour hike will take us to a summit over the Hudson River. You will be rewarded with stunning views of the river and, on a clear day, Manhattan.
For more information call Henryka at



Laurie Anderson

212-582-5192. Rain cancels

MON APRIL 18

7:00 - 8:30 p.m. • Free
Study Group on "the Souls of Black Folk," W.E.B. DuBois' groundbreaking classic
Freedom Hall
113 W. 128th
212-222-0633

TUES APRIL 19

7:30 p.m. \$6 • \$10 - \$15
THE STRUGGLE FOR A SECULAR AMERICA: HOW TO BEAT RIGHT-WING FUNDAMENTALISM
Featuring Esther Kaplan, author of *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*.
Brecht Forum
451 West St. @ Bank St.

7pm • Donations accepted.
SCREENING OF *POISON DUST*

A new look at U.S. radioactive weapons. Queens screening of this important full-length documentary. Discussion with filmmakers and activists to follow.
All Saints' Church
43-12 46th St. (at 43rd Ave.) Sunnyside, NY

WED APRIL 20

6pm to 10pm Sliding scale \$10-\$20
NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD BENEFIT
Live bluegrass with The Cobble Hillbillies at 8pm, DJ and dancing 6-8. Celebrate and Support the Mass Defense Committee of the National Lawyers Guild. Thank you kindly!
Galapagos, 70 N. 6th Street in Williamsburg

7p.m. • Free
SEX, SENIORS & THE HIV CRISIS
Speaker: Jane Fowler, 69-year-old HIV-positive grandmother and retired journalist
2 W. 64th St., 4th Fl.

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT?

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

BELOW 14TH ST.

Bluestockings Books & Café
172 Allen St.

Times Up!
49 E. Houston St.

Lotus Café
Clinton & Stanton Sts.

Key Foods
Ave. A & E. 4th St.

May Day Books at Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.
(Between 9th & 10th Sts.)

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

LGBT Center
213 W. 13th St

Shakespeare & Co. Books
1 Whitehall St.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Revolution Books
9 W. 19th St.

Chelsea Sq. Diner
23rd St. & 9th Ave.

Second Wave Laundrocen
55th St. & 9th Ave.

Above 96th St.

Labyrinth Books
536 W. 112th St.

96th St. Library
112 E. 96th St.

Kim's Books
113th St. & Broadway

Strictly Roots Restaurant
123rd & Adam
Clayton Powell

Coogan's Bar
169th St. & Broadway

Fort Washington Bakery & Deli
808 W. 181st St.

Jumpin' Jalapenos
W. 207th St. (Between B'wy & Vermilya)

Cafe Seven
7 Henshaw St.

BROOKLYN

Tillie's of Brooklyn
248 Dekalb Ave.

Green Apple Café
110 Dekalb Ave.

Marquet Patisserie
680 Fulton St.

Halcyon
227 Smith St.

Moda Cafe
294 5th Ave.

Freddy's Bar and Backroom
Dean St. & 6th Ave.

BAM
30 Lafayette Ave.

Community Book Store
7th Ave. & Carroll Sts.

Tea Lounge
Union St. @ 7th Ave.
9th St. @ 7th Ave.

Atlantis Super Laundry Center
472 Atlantic Ave.

Photoplay Video
933 Manhattan Ave.

Verb Cafe
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th

Jane Doe Books
93 Montrose Ave.

Make the Road by Walking
301 Grove St.

QUEENS

Sunnyside Library
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.

East Elmhurst Library
95-06 Astoria Blvd.

Jackson Heights Library
35-51 81st St.

Friend's Tavern
78-11 Roosevelt Ave.

Langston Hughes Library
100-01 Northern Blvd.

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

Café Aubergine
49-22 Skillman Ave.

Sunnyside Library
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.

Book Value
Broadway Between 33rd & 34th Sts.

BRONX

Bronx Museum
165th St. & Grand Concourse

The Point
940 Garrison Ave.

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THANK YOU

We would like to thank everyone who has generously supported us during our fund appeal, but we are only halfway towards our goal of \$10,000 that we need to keep publishing regularly. If you haven't given yet...

Please go to
indypendent.org
& make your contribution today. Thank you.

THE INDYPENDENT

Lower East Side volunteers gets reading to prisoners when the system fails

BOOK 'EM

By KIERA BUTLER

On May 9, 2002, Stanley Baker, Jr., 35, incarcerated at the Ellis Unit in Livingston, Texas, wrote a thank-you note. "Dear Sir," he began. "I would like to thank you for the books you sent me last month. I'm going to be executed May 30th, but I'd like you to know that those books will give me much pleasure in the days remaining to me. Yours truly, Stan Baker."

Cartoon musical notes decorate the stationery on which Baker wrote his thank-you note. His penmanship is neat and controlled, and at the bottom of the note, next to a large, round treble clef, someone has made a note in a different color pen: "Stan Baker was executed May 30th, 2002."

New York City Books Through Bars, the group that Stan Baker thanked for his last books, is a local chapter of a national organization that donates books to prisoners. Its members meet twice a week at ABC No Rio, a community center on the Lower East Side.

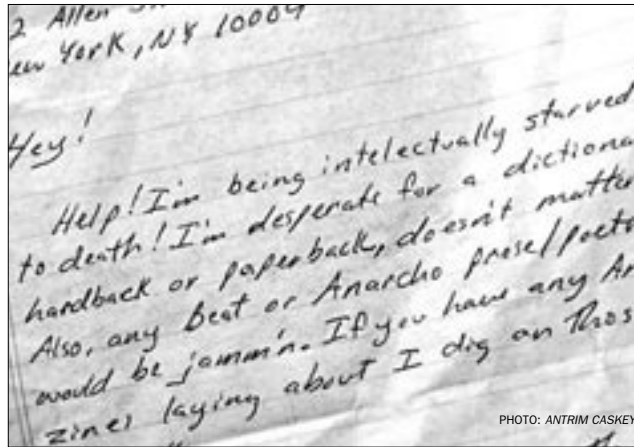
With no formal funding, Books Through Bars relies on word-of-mouth advertising within prisons. The majority of books are donations from people's homes. At meetings no one discusses group policies or makes goals; they just open the 300-400 letters they receive from prisoners every month and try to fulfill their requests.

DISAPPEARING PRISON LIBRARIES

Over the nine years Books Through Bars has existed, members have noticed that prisoners in most places have begun to rely on book donations. Because of cuts in funding, prisoners sometimes wait months for library services. In New York, for example, few prisoners have regular access to books. Steve Likosky, a correctional services librarian at the New York Public Library, only has enough resources to bring a bookmobile to three prisons in Rikers Island Penal Colony each week. Every few months, he tries to change which prisons he serves. Since there are 10 prisons on the island, it can be a long, boring wait until the bookmobile comes.

"When I started this job, there was a room full of books in every jail," said Likosky. Now there's only one permanent library on the entire island.

It's frustrating for anarchists to work with prisons. While Books Through Bars has barely any rules, prisons have rules about everything: how prisoners can receive mail, how people can donate books, and what kind of books they can donate.



BOOKS THROUGH BARS receives 300-400 letters a month from prisoners.

Mostly, it's up to individual prison administrations to decide what makes a book "dangerous." Most prisons are afraid that donors might use books to hide drugs or razor blades for prisoners. Most prisons only accept paperback books. Hardcovers, they say, could be used as weapons. Books Through Bars gets around this rule by ripping the covers off of hardcover books before sending them.

"Part of the work here is demolishing books," said Jessica Ross, one of the group's core members. "Since many of us work in libraries or bookstores, it's psychologically a hard thing to do."

A majority of prisons screen books for content as well. Very few prisons allow pornography, and most won't hand out books that might inspire hate crimes. (White supremacist literature, for example, is not usually allowed.) But censorship always raises unanswerable questions. Each prison defines pornography differently. Ross said prisons in Texas, for example, tend to bristle at William S. Burroughs.

Books Through Bars has an internal screening system, too. Their website says they won't accept donations of "religious books, legal books (except legal dictionaries), old magazines (besides National Geographic), hate literature, encyclopedias, mass market fiction (such as Danielle Steele and Stephen King)," but Ross said some members send

these items anyway. Usually, individual members decide whether they want to fulfill a particular request. As a rule, though, they won't send business or real estate books.

"We're trying to send things that would challenge the status quo," said Vikki Law, one of the founding members of the group. "It's sort of a pipe dream that you can get out and make a billion in real estate or whatever, and we like to challenge that."

Books Through Bars saved Stan Baker's letter in their binder along with dozens of other letters from prisoners. The binder has the feel of a lovingly crafted photo album. One section has drawings: a knight on a horse breaking through a brick wall, Popeye, a skull and crossbones, a weeping Native American, and many, many big cats with gleaming teeth and exquisitely detailed claws. One man sent a handmade crucifix hanging on a length of twine. You get the feeling that maybe prison is sometimes not how you thought it was. There are prisoners in their cells, drawing and writing letters. And men on death row are reading straight through their last weeks of life.

For more, see abcnorio.org/affiliated/btb.html

BOOKS THROUGH BARS--NYC
c/o Bluestackings Bookstore
172 Allen Street
New York, NY 10009

New Debt Law Punishes the Sick

By KAT AARON

Four years ago Tianna Kennedy was debt free. Today she's \$80,000 in the hole and declaring bankruptcy. Kennedy's financial woes aren't due to profligate spending. She had a run of bad luck in a country with a shrinking safety net. It could happen to anyone. But if the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act passes Congress, getting back on her feet might become a lot more difficult.

After college, Kennedy worked in real estate. She returned to school to pursue a master's degree in Performance Studies, financing her way with large student loans. Three weeks into school, she learned that her recurring illness was malaria, picked up on a trip to Guatemala. This is where things start to go downhill.

"I was in school, going crazy from the malaria pills. I lost my job because I was so sick and stressed," Kennedy says. "My student loan money went entirely to rent." Then she started experiencing fatigue, joint pains and dizzy spells. "As it turns out," she explains, "I had been bitten by a tick and got Lyme disease." Kennedy extended her stay in grad school to keep her health insurance, but never graduated. With no degree, she still has to pay back her student loans.

Where did she go wrong? She worked, went to school, went on vacation. She didn't buy a Mercedes, she wasn't wearing furs. She was hit by a series of unfortunate events. And then she got kicked when she was down.

"I fell behind on my credit card bills, and they were maxed out from medical treatments. And because I fell behind, the interest rates all shot up to 24 percent," Kennedy sighs. "You wind up just paying off interest, and never chipping away at what you owe. At this point I just really don't see any way out besides bankruptcy."

That way out might soon be closing. Under current law, most people file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, in which almost all debts are liquidated. The new bankruptcy law would push more borrowers into Chapter 13, which provides only partial relief from creditors. The Senate version of the law (S. 256) passed in mid-March, and the companion House bill (H.R. 685) is expected to pass imminently. President Bush has said he will sign it.

While bill sponsor Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) claims that the recent growth of bankruptcies is due to "irresponsible consumerism," Tamara Draut of the economic policy group Demos disagrees. She attributes the growth in bankruptcies — over 1.5 million personal bankruptcies in 2004 — to a weak job market, rising tuitions and health-care expenses. Almost half of all personal bankruptcies are precipitated by medical emergencies. Draut also points to abusive practices in the credit card industry as a major contributor to bankruptcy.

Once Kennedy declares bankruptcy her credit will be shot for 10 years, until the bankruptcy filing comes off her credit report. "I'm really sad about what bankruptcy means for my future," Kennedy says. "It's as if one's social worth is based on credit reports more than on who you are or what you do now." A damaged credit report affects far more than a person's ability to get credit; a bankruptcy can make it hard to get a job, an apartment and even insurance. "Before all this happened, I had platinum cards — I could've bought a house on credit," recalls Kennedy. "Now, I'm locked out. I really wish I didn't have to declare bankruptcy. But I'm glad it's an option." Kennedy has that option now. But for the person who finds herself out of work and \$80,000 under a year from now, 10 years will simply find her a decade older and deeper in debt.



Parents, teachers and students in all five boroughs joined the Alliance for Quality Education March 24 in collecting petitions and pennies urging Mayor Bloomberg to fight for the billions of dollars in school funding the courts have ordered the state to pay NYC schools.

LEFT: A student at P.S. 212 in Hell's Kitchen contributes to the campaign.

PHOTO: ANTRIM CASKEY

ALL CHARGES DROPPED ON THE BROOKLYN 7

On March 23, after three days of wildly conflicting police testimony, Judge Burke cleared the remaining charges against seven young defendants who had been attacked by the NYPD at the November 2003 Anarchist People of Color party in central Brooklyn. The defendants faced an average of ten spurious charges each, including rioting, attempted assault on a police officer, menacing and others.

"This is a win for the whole community. We're grateful to have had so much support, and outstanding lawyers who donated their services," said Lionel Ouellette. One supporter said, "It was amazing to be in court and watch the police lie and get proved wrong with photos."

The legal vindication is bittersweet. In the original assault, cops from the 77th Precinct notorious for violence against the community, rushed the benefit for a local organization opposing police brutality and the "prison-industrial complex." Without provocation, the officers attacked and severely injured attendees, spraying over 100 people with chemical agents. Having attempted to confiscate the sign-in sheet, police arrested eight, subjecting them to 17 months of legal limbo.

STUDENT RESISTANCE
Revolution in the Air
FEMINIST

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 radical bookstore | activist center | fair trade cafe
 172 Allen St. • 212.777.6028
 bluestockings.com

APRIL 15TH - 7PM
 Global Lockdown: Race, Gender and the Prison-Industrial Complex
 Edited by Julia Sudbury
 "Global Lockdown" is an original, smart, and provocative volume, and makes a compelling case for the convergence of abolitionist prison and anti-globalization work in the age of global capitalism, neoliberalism, and U.S. economic and political hegemony. It is an urgent wake-up call for scholars, activists and social justice workers and is a visionary and wide-ranging anti-racist, transnational feminist praxis.

APRIL 19TH - 7PM
 Screening Benefit for the Landless Workers March to Brasília, Brazil
 From mid-April to May 2005, thousands of Brazil's rural workers (the MST) will march on the capital of Brazil, to counter the myths of the global agribusiness, reiterate the urgent need for land reform and restate their proposal for an inclusive and sustainable development model rooted in the political and economic participation of Brazil's majority, the working poor. Come out and hear their story.

APRIL 22ND - 7PM
 In this special event, entitled "Southern Girls Do It Better!", Georgia native Tayari Jones and author of "Leaving Atlanta", reads from her new novel, "The Untelling" with Maud Newton who reads from her novel in progress about fundamentalist Christians in 1980's Miami, and how extremism can pass from one generation to the next.

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The New PC

Report Clears Columbia Professors

After receiving testimony from more than 120 Columbia University students, faculty members, administrators and alumni, an ad-hoc committee charged by university President Lee Bollinger to investigate claims of in-class intimidation of pro-Israel students found, "no evidence of any statements made by the faculty that could reasonably be construed as anti-Semitic." The committee identified a single incident in which it felt that Professor Joseph Massad "exceeded commonly accepted bounds" of classroom conduct.

By CHRIS ANDERSON

However, the report noted: "We have no basis for believing that Professor Massad systematically suppressed dissenting views in his classroom." On the contrary, the report portrayed an in-class environment in which students of differing views were frequently allowed to voice opinions that contradicted those of the professor.

The committee found far more evidence that political opponents harassed professors in the Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures (MEALAC) department. "Testimony that we received indicated that in February 2002 Professor Massad had good reason to believe that a member of the Columbia faculty was monitoring his teaching and approaching his students, requesting them to provide information on his statements in class as part of a campaign against him," the report asserted. The member of the faculty, a professor at the university's medical school, was not named.

According to the committee's report, "a small group of unregistered auditors attended Massad's lectures, and their frequent interruptions and hostile asides disturbed many of the students."

Columbians for Academic Freedom (CAF), a university group that has publicized the accusations against MEALAC professors, denounced the report as "a whitewash." The report is "a second strike against the university," CAF member Ariel Beery said in a March 31 press conference.

The ad-hoc committee, composed entirely of Columbia University faculty, says it received only three serious charges of academic intimidation. Two of the three charges were dismissed; the third, an allegation of an incident in which Massad yelled at a student for "denying Israeli atrocities" was deemed "credible." However, the report went on to state, "three participants in the class who were interviewed by the committee...do not recall such an episode."

All five recommendations from the committee dealt with improving Columbia's student grievance procedure. The committee argued that a poorly designed school grievance policy opened it up to outside intervention on the part of political forces with their own agenda.

Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz has publicly pledged to "create a second, independent committee with no ties to Columbia if the school's own committee reaches what he consid-



Prof. Joseph Massad

ers a biased conclusion." It remains to be seen whether Dershowitz and pro-Israel students on campus will follow through with these threats.

It is also unclear what impact the release of the report will have upon growing faculty disillusionment with Bollinger. In early March, an open letter from 46 faculty members to Bollinger asserted that "no one associated with the Columbia community, including students, faculty and others, should have reason to fear reprisals or sanctions of any kind for expressing unorthodox or unpopular views of any political stripe."

According to the *New York Times*, a small group of graduate students began circulating a petition in late March calling for Bollinger's resignation, because he "failed to defend our faculty, thereby nurturing an environment of fear and intimidation throughout the university."

Suburban Hell

L.I. Kids Ace Free Space Chase

By JOHN TARLETON

After two years of community meetings, a year of intensive fundraising and another eight months of searching, a group of pragmatic dreamers on Long Island finally have finally obtained their goal: 3,000 square feet of space in the middle of suburban hell.

"We're a space where things have the potential to happen," says Kevin Van Meter, 27, one of the founding members of the Long Island Free Space. "We got kids who come out who ordinarily would never get involved with anarchists but who see what they are doing at the space and are able to connect it with larger social movements."

Located almost two hours from the New York City in Ronkonkoma, the Free Space is the only youth-run, non-profit on Long Island.

It has about 60 active members and currently hosts four shows a week. It is already home to an alternative library, art gallery, a womyn's collective and a bike recycling program. The Free Space will hold its official grand opening on April 10.

The Free Space grew out of the Modern Times collective, a loose network of radical young Long Islanders that flourished in 1999 and 2000 during the heady days of the "anti-globalization" movement. The group gradually began to question the effectiveness of urban street protest tactics and ended up jet-tisoning many of its outwardly radical trappings after a disastrous series of arrests during the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia.

"The first thing we did was to stop thinking of ourselves as activists, as activism as it was being practiced was a special activity that

was being done outside of the experience of everyday life," Van Meter says.

Two years of community meetings followed as Van Meter and others found strong support for a vibrant community center in the middle of Long Island. Realizing this would take money, the Free Space collective began fundraising and writing grants and hired part-time staff to push the project forward. Just when they were about to despair of ever finding a permanent home for their project, Free Space organizers found the group's new space early this year.

"You need to create institutions first that can be a base of emergence for future movements," Van Meter says. "As long as you look solely at 'Big P' politics and ignore these micro-level activities, you are missing a big part of the picture."

For more, see lifreespace.org



NYPD Burns Bridges Left and Bike

City cops confiscated scores of bicycles locked to street fixtures during the March 26 Critical Mass ride. Six months earlier, District Judge William H. Pauley issued a preliminary injunction barring the seizure of locked bikes. Lawyers for the cyclists accuse the City of abusing its authority. With warm weather returning, it remains to be seen how large the monthly rides will grow in the face of steady police repression.

PHOTO: ANTRIM CASKEY

Lively, Venerable Garden at Risk

Tilling The Bronx

By XAVIER TAYO

Carlos Torres helped start the Rincón Criollo Community Center in 1976, when he and his neighbors carted away the rubble strewn around the corner of 158th Street and Brook Avenue in the South Bronx. Rincón Criollo has since flourished as a vibrant community center and green space for the Melrose neighborhood. "We're a cultural center where everyone is welcomed," he said.

Now, as dump trucks line the streets of the South Bronx and construction cranes loom overhead, Torres and other local residents worry about what will happen to a neighborhood they helped sustain long before it became a destination for the city's next wave of gentrification. Rincón Criollo gardeners are trying to avoid what happened to the nearby Family Group Garden and Latinos Unidos Gardens, which were forced from their former homes into a smaller combined lot.

"Rincón is legendary, and it's shameful how they have been treated," said Marty Rodgers of the South Bronx United Gardeners.

The City's plan for the area, the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan, would have bulldozed these open spaces and uprooted longtime residents from their homes. This would have resulted in major changes to area and displaced thousands of residents and hundreds of local businesses. For the past dozen years the Melrose neighborhood has been in

constant danger of having developers take over its 35 square blocks to build new housing that most area residents couldn't afford. In opposition to these forces, community groups such as Nos Quedamos and More Gardens! have been fighting on behalf of local residents. But many residents are afraid that these plans will prevent them from continuing to live in their neighborhoods; that gentrification will force out low-income and minority residents and rob the neighborhood of its identity.

The problems of the South Bronx can be traced back to the 1960s, when several stable working-class neighborhoods were destroyed to build the Cross Bronx Expressway, and most of the area's middle-class residents moved north to the Co-op City complex. In the 1970s recession, as municipal services were cut and crime, unemployment, and oil prices rose, landlords abandoned whole blocks of buildings, often hiring arsonists to burn them down so they could collect insurance. Thirty years later, 29 percent of the Bronx's residents spend more than half their income for housing, the highest proportion of any borough. The South Bronx in particular remains one of the city's poorest areas. Surrounded by three major highways, it has a high incidence of asthma, and according to the NYC Department of Health, local residents are 20 percent more likely to die from chronic lung disease as compared to New York City as a whole.



GEORGE RIVERA, retired, 68, leans against a cherry tree that was salvaged from a nearby lot and has since flourished at Rincón Criollo. Rivera has been gardening at Rincón Criollo, a thriving community garden, for about 20 years. The Church of St. Peter and Paul looms behind, a church that has strongly supported the garden over the years. PHOTO: ANTRIM CASKEY

Yet while the South Bronx was burning, Rincón Criollo was sprouting. The community garden was started and a *casita* (little house) was erected in 1976. Rincón Criollo is also a center for music workshops, concerts, and festivals, and the casitas serve as a reminder of the Puerto Rican countryside, where many of the neighborhood's residents spent their childhood. It also provides an open green space where locals can grow healthy foods in an area that has no supermarkets.

The gardeners have been meeting with city agencies and officials such as newly elected City Councilmember Maria del Carmen

Arroyo, trying to persuade them to adopt the "Homes and Garden Plan" a proposal by community and housing experts showing how both gardens and housing can exist in the Melrose neighborhood.

With Rincón Criollo's future still in limbo, the gardeners are staying where they are and preparing their lots for the spring. "We're working now. Sometimes to nine o'clock," said Felix, one gardener. "We're not moving. You see that we're working."

"We will back Rincón Criollo in any decision they make." Aresh Javadi of More Gardens!



About 350 Williamsburg and Greenpoint residents gathered on the steps of City Hall April 4 to oppose Mayor Bloomberg's plan to rezone a vast swath of the North Brooklyn waterfront affecting both Williamsburg and Greenpoint.

By RAHUL CHADHA

Call it The Wall. A two-mile stretch of prime north Brooklyn real estate developed into a towering row of luxury condominium buildings that range in height from 150 to 350 feet, effectively cutting off the existing Williamsburg and Greenpoint neighborhoods from the East River waterfront. This is the future of the industrial strip of land that hugs the river, as envisioned in a massive rezoning proposal put forth by the Bloomberg Administration's City Planning Commission. Not surprisingly, hordes of opposition to the proposal has been organizing for the past few years, ever since the administration's plans were made public.

What really sticks in the craw of community activists is the Bloomberg plan's disregard of the (197-a) planning documents (so named for the section of the city charter allowing communities to develop their own development plans) formulated by a coalition of residents and members of Community Board 1, which serves the two north Brooklyn neighborhoods. Those plans, which were formulated over several years — up to 15 by some accounts — differ significantly from the Bloomberg plan, which itself claims to build on the principles put forth by the (197-a) plans.

Joe Vance considers that declaration a laughable conceit. "The (197-a) calls for a rezoning towards residential. Beyond

Developers See Big Money on the Williamsburg Coast

Waterfront Grab in Bkln

that it's hard to see any correlation," says Vance, a member of the Greenpoint Williamsburg Association for Parks and Planning (GWAPP), a coalition of 40 community groups that have been lobbying for the community plans' adoption. Organizations like GWAPP see a laundry list of problems with the Bloomberg plan: the complete lack of guaranteed affordable housing, one quarter the amount of park land as recommended by the city government's own standards, and buildings whose size would be grossly out of context with the existing neighborhood. Vance also says the Bloomberg plan is driven by the mayor's desire for a waterfront park to help sell New York City to the International Olympic Committee, and the prospect of possibly providing one-third of the 60,000 housing units he aims to bring to the city, in one fell swoop.

The (197-a) plans call for a guarantee of 40 percent of the new housing to be designated affordable to current residents, whose median income hovers around \$27,000. They also make provisions for small businesses and light industries, such as metal shops, furniture outlets and lighting manufacturers. The height of the tallest buildings would also be capped at 200 feet, 150 feet lower than the tallest buildings in the Bloomberg plan.

Community groups like GWAPP and the Williamsburg Warriors have spent the last few months lobbying City Council members hard in favor of the (197-a) plans, or at the very least, a compromise between the two. Chris Zucker, a Brooklyn native and resident of Williamsburg for the past three years, admits that he only had a rough idea just how drastically the proposed zoning plan would change the character of his neighborhood until relatively recently. Along with the two other members of the Williamsburg Warriors, Zucker grew into neighborhood activism, spending his energy convincing the disparate demographics within the affected neighborhoods — Polish, Latino, hipster — of the destructiveness of the Bloomberg plan. "I just don't feel like being priced out of every neighborhood I've ever lived in," says Zucker.

Activists see the gentrification of Soho as an ugly precedent to what might happen to their neighborhoods should the Bloomberg plan go through.

Council Member David Yassky, a Democrat who represents the affected neighborhoods, has already come out against the

Bloomberg plan, but stops short of full endorsement of the (197-a) plans. "The community plan is much closer to our idea of what the community should look like," said Evan Thies, a spokesman from Yassky's office. "But we're willing to reach a compromise where we get more affordable housing and more open space." Meaning, essentially, that Yassky's office believes future affordable housing needs will inevitably precipitate the construction of buildings significantly larger than those currently in the neighborhood. Says Thies: "We have to allow for some larger buildings in order to facilitate the number of affordable units we need to sustain that community."

Compromise is not taboo, at least not to Vance, who says that GWAPP has been trying to find some common ground with the city for the past two years. "What we'd like to see happen is some real negotiations with the city, some true movement towards where we are," he says. But Vance is not buying in to the city's argument that affordable housing is unattainable without residential towers crowding out the waterfront. He says that buildings 15 to 20 stories high with 30 percent of the housing designated affordable are a feasible option. "They're real numbers — they work. The city just doesn't want to believe the numbers because they're too beholden to the development community."

The Bloomberg plan has already suffered several small defeats, having been condemned by Community Board 1, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, and Betsy Gorbau, the public advocate for New York City. However, on March 13 the City Planning Commission voted in favor of the Bloomberg plan, a decision that is hard to consider a surprise considering the agency was voting on their own proposal.

Warriors Eve Sibley and Siri Wilson were part of those who crowded the steps of City Hall during a seven-hour public hearing on the plans held April 2. "Our council members knew there were 300 people at the hearing, maybe 400, and that's nothing compared to the number of people we're going to get involved," said Sibley. The plans must still go through various committees before the 50-day City Council review process expires on May 3. It is expected that the council's adoption of a rezoning plan will occur sometime in May.

Armed Vigilantes 'Patrol' Mexican Border

MINUTEMAN PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS COMPLEXITIES OF BORDER CRISIS

BY JESSICA LEE

Small details of volunteers began patrolling a 20-mile stretch of the Arizona-Mexico border on April 1 against what they say the government is failing to stop: an "invasion of mobs of illegal aliens and terrorists." The month-long gathering, dubbed the Minuteman Project, has attracted supporters, counter-protesting human rights activists, and hordes of media from all over the country. Organized primarily to bring attention to a region wrought with conflict, the project has been called patriotic by some and racist by others.

Dozens of media representatives were present throughout the weekend, often outnumbering Minuteman volunteers and protesters. Many have criticized the amount of media attention, saying that too much attention was being paid to a project that may or may not be successful. "The media has become a story in itself," said Bisbee resident Mike Anderson. "I want the media to go home and the vigilantes to go home with their guns," he said.

The project claims to have aided in the apprehension of 18 undocumented migrants on April 3. Volunteers called U.S. Border Patrol after sighting the group walking through a private ranch just north of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Grupo Beta, a Mexican group that helps migrants on the Mexican side of the border, was also on patrol. Founded 12 years ago, the group regularly monitors the border, giving migrants water but also encouraging them to return home. Coordinator Bertha A. de la Rosa Carrizales said they approached 30 to 40 migrants in the desert on Saturday and Sunday, alerting them to the Minuteman Project.



Minuteman volunteer John Lehmann, 46, of New York, watches for migrants from right against the barbed wire border fence near Naco. PHOTO: PETER HOLDERNESS

The American Civil Liberties Union is also monitoring the situation to protect First Amendment freedoms and migrants' rights.

"The Minuteman Project is a symptom of our failed immigration policy," Sinema, D-House District 15, said. "The project is an example that we have lost focus on a healthy border policy."

While the project claims to have more than 1,000 volunteers, between 115 and 460 showed up during the weekend, according to various reports. Minuteman founder Chris Simcox stated that five border-monitoring sectors have been set up.

In the "Naco Sector," nine observation posts were established, comprised of approximately four volunteers each. Two Minuteman air patrols were launched Sunday, days earlier than planned. According to the project's website, 40 licensed

pilots with 16 aircraft have registered.

Julian Sokoloff, a Minuteman volunteer from New Mexico, believes that U.S. businesses are partly to blame for the migrant traffic and the loss of American jobs. "We need to have penalties for businesses that hire illegal immigration," Sokoloff, a University of Oregon political science graduate, asserted. "It won't happen because the corporations are running the country."

The Minutemen also argue that the border should be sealed to keep terrorists from entering the country. "I feel we need to protect our borders, because we don't need another 9/11," said Robin Heathorn, who is on the Minuteman Project waiting list with her husband.

According to the U.S. Border Patrol, "97 to 98 percent of those apprehended are Mexican nationals" and of the remainder most are from Central or South America. For their part, human rights groups worry about the safety of migrants. Protesters held signs and banged on pots and pans, symbolizing the hungry people who travel to find a better life, outside the hall where project members registered on April 1.

"As residents of the border region, we have seen first-hand the effects of the border militarization these vigilantes are calling for," said Lenny Molina, an Earth First! member. "Militarization accelerates the destruction of desert ecosystems and indigenous cultures and destroys the lives of people who are ultimately refugees of U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America."

No More Deaths, a coalition of border activist and humanitarian groups, estimates that more than 3,000 migrants have died while crossing the inhospitable border area since the 1990s.

While the Minuteman Project may monitor the border for a month, the U.S. government continues to push policies like the Central American Free Trade Agreement and the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement, which will likely increase the number of economic refugees traveling through the desert seeking a better life.

For more, see arizona.indymedia.org

BATTLE OF THE BISCUIT FOREST HEATS UP

A Clear-Cut Fight

BY SUSAN CHENELLE

A 30-foot tripod erected in front of the Forest Service's regional headquarters brought mid-day traffic in downtown Portland to a halt on March 30. The apparatus suspended a pod 20 feet above Second Avenue bearing an activist named "Pax," and a banner reading, "Burned Forests Are Alive—Stop Biscuit Logging." This direct action by Stumptown Earth First! was the latest confrontation in an intense few weeks that have seen 49 arrests in the two-year battle to save the trees of southern Oregon's Siskiyou National Forest.

During the Biscuit Fire of 2002 approximately 500,000 acres of the Wild Siskiyou River area burned to varying degrees. Though Forest Service scientists stated that the fire was beneficial to the overall health of the forest, the Bush administration responded with the so-called "Biscuit Fire Recovery Project," a plan to cut down 20,000 acres of trees — the largest single logging project in Forest Service history. This includes approximately 9,000 acres of late-successional reserve (LSR), or old-growth trees previously safeguarded by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. The project is based on two premises: that it's simply a salvage operation to cut down dead trees, and that removing the burned trees will help prevent future fires. Activists contend that fires are a necessary part of the life cycle of a forest, that many trees are burned but not dead, that even dead trees serve important functions, and that logging will make fires more likely, by removing relatively fire-proof older trees and

leaving easily combustible branches and younger trees behind.

As Laura, a member of Wild Siskiyou Action, told *The Independent*, using "salvage" as an excuse, this project is the first to threaten the inventoried roadless areas, land that had been protected by the Roadless Rule enacted during the final months of the Clinton administration. In order to "salvage" the trees within the 13 square miles of roadless areas included in the Biscuit timber sale, the Forest Service must build access roads within the area. As a result the area will no longer be roadless and, by definition, no longer protected by the Roadless Rule.

Two lawsuits questioning the legality of this timber sale are underway. The first, filed by the Siskiyou Project, the Sierra Club and others, argues that the project violates the National Forest Plan and the Roadless Rule. The second, brought by the Cascadia Wildland Project, National Forest Protection Alliance, Native Forest Network, and Klamath Forest Alliance, charges that logging protocols have been violated and pertains to the entire Biscuit region, not just the old-growth areas. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals denied a request for a temporary restraining order on March 25; the plaintiffs are now seeking a preliminary injunction to halt logging until the trial begins.

In the meantime, logging continues. John West of the Silver Creek Timber Company said he hoped to have half the trees on the ground before the end of March. Since the Fiddler Mountain timber sale began on March 7, activists affiliated with Wild Siskiyou Action, the Oxygen Collective and other



DIRECT ACTION: Oregon banner hanging. PHOTO: ROLF SKAR

groups have staged numerous rallies, road-blocks and tree sits that have blocked logging trucks for several hours at a time. As Laura of Wild Siskiyou Action explained, these disruptions make the timber sale substantially more expensive for the Forest Service and the logging companies. She claims that some loggers are already refusing to work in areas where there have been protests.

To reinforce their own skills and to bring in new faces and ideas, Wild Siskiyou Action held a skillshare camp from April 1-8. The camp featured workshops on non-violent philosophy and direct action, rope climbing, road blockades and more, and culminated in a direct action.

And they are already looking beyond the Fiddler Mountain sale. "Beyond Fiddler, there are five other LSR timber sales that could be logged," Laura explained. "I was just out on the coast, hiking those sales, and there hasn't been any activity yet, but we're keeping an eye on that. If they start going into those other sales, we're going to be there."

OREGON WOMEN'S BRIDGE BLOCKADE

BY SUSAN CHENELLE

On March 14, 20 women were arrested for blocking the Green Bridge over the Illinois River. Among those arrested was a nine-months pregnant Stacy Williams, supported by her midwife and birthing team. For Harriet Smith, 85, Dot Fisher, 76, and Joan Norman, 72, it was their second arrest of the week. While they stood on the bridge, Becky White hung below them, suspended on a small platform by a rope system that blocked the convoy of logging trucks for nearly seven hours.

Most of the women were released within 24 hours; however, Norman refused bail and remained in jail until she was given an emergency medical release on March 29. Norman says it wasn't just her multiple medications and the special breathing machine she requires that made her too much trouble to be kept locked up, it was that she was counselling her sister inmates to stand up for their rights as well.

"Now is one of the most desperate times, and someone has to sit down and say no. We have to use our civil liberties. They're the only ones we have left," she insists. "Timber companies are only doing what we created them to do — make a profit. We need to make laws to regulate companies or we become their slaves. If I have to go to jail, so do they."

Rule of Law vs. Rule by God

By C. CLARK KISSINGER

No one has ever seen anything quite like it. Republican Senate leaders refused to let Congress recess until the House, which had already adjourned, reassembled to pass the "Terri Schiavo Bill." The President flew back from the Texas ranch to sign this special piece of "humanitarian" legislation in the middle of the night wearing his PJs. But this special act of Congress was anything but humanitarian. It was a carefully planned frontal assault on what have been basic principles of law up to now.

Rarely has there been such a raw and arrogant dismissal of legal precedent and judicial procedures, with such powerful support from both Congress and the White House. Some prominent Republicans were shocked by how far it has gone. Douglas Kmiec, a conservative law professor at Pepperdine University and big Bush supporter, put it simply: "It contravenes almost every principle known to constitutional jurisprudence." As indeed it does.

The Terri Schiavo drama shows just how far the Christian right and their chief spokesperson, President George W. Bush, are willing to go in striking down the rule of law. They are clearly determined to overrule any previous precedent that stands in their way and to impose a form of political rule on society that can only be called "theocracy," and which in practice would mean a modern American form of fascism.

Separation of Powers

Congress—the legislative branch—is supposed to make laws. The courts—the judicial branch—are supposed to interpret how those laws get applied in individual cases. The Supreme Court has long held that Congress may not enact legislation that nullifies, suspends, or reverses a judicial determination in a particular case. Yet reversing a particular decision is exactly what Congress attempted to do in this case.

Equal Protection of the Law

Laws are supposed to apply to everyone, particularly when they pertain to people's rights before the law. But out of 290 million people, this special law was passed setting up a special legal procedure "for the relief of the parents of Theresa Marie Schiavo." The law applies to the Terri Schiavo case alone, and gives one federal district court in Florida special jurisdiction to hear a new lawsuit brought by her parents. This is totally at variance with the principle that laws are to apply equally to everyone.

No Ex Post Facto Laws

A fundamental principle of U.S. law has been the prohibition of "ex post facto" laws. (Ex post facto means "after the fact.") Laws are supposed to apply from their passage on, not work backward in time to apply to events before they were passed. Yet that is what Congress did here. The "act for the relief of the parents of Terri Schiavo" explicitly does not apply to future such cases in other families. It only applies to Schiavo, whose case has already been fully adjudicated.

Res Judicata "A Matter Already Decided"

Another major principle of U.S. law is that you cannot keep going back into court to

relitigate an issue over and over again until you get the result you want. Yet that is what the "Terri Schiavo bill" tries to do. It gives a federal district court in Florida the power to reopen and relitigate the whole case from scratch—this after 10 years of litigation with several trips to the Supreme Court along the way. In short, the Christian fascist forces simply don't like what the courts have repeatedly found to be the facts in the case, so they wanted to have all the previous decisions thrown out and tried to force the courts to decide the case all over again.

Due Process under the Law

The right not to have her life artificially prolonged belongs to Terri Schiavo alone, under Florida state law. She expressed her wishes in advance of the illness that led to her brain death, and the Florida state courts have acknowledged that those were her wishes and upheld her decision. This new legislation would have compelled Terri Schiavo's body to be artificially maintained based on other people's values and wishes. The new law would have her basic rights taken away by a new "special process."

Separation of Church & State

The driving force in all this has been the attempt to impose a particular brand of fundamentalist Christian theology as compulsory public policy. In introducing the bill in the House, the Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner began and ended his speech with references to "Holy Week." Other politicians cited the Pope's pronouncement against the Florida court's orders. They even referred to the "Passion of Terri," noting the passage of their bill was on Palm Sunday, as if they were empowering the resurrection of Terri Schiavo.



ANDY SEMNOS

Take Back the Life Force

By STEW ALBERT

Back in the '60s, we were all about life. We talked endlessly about the life force, and our drugs were life drugs as opposed to the death-downer drugs consumed by our parents.

Now in 2005, the Christian, crazy, right wing says it stands for a culture of life and that secular liberals are pro-death. I've seen a couple of obnoxious die-ins at peace marches, but besides that, what are the crazies talking about?

When the right-wingers proclaim they are pro-life, they usually mean that they worship fetuses and oppose aborting them, even if the life of the mother may be at stake, if the poor woman was raped, if she just can't afford to have a kid or if she might go nuts if she had one. They figure a woman's body is Christian state property, and who cares what she thinks, because "life" comes first.

Of late, the right-wing version of "life culture" is being pushed via the issue of human beings who through some misfortune live on in a vegetative state. You can't mercifully pull the plug even if the best scientific evidence indicates that the poor person can't improve. What do scientists know anyway? They think Terri Schiavo and Jesus are descended from monkeys.

These same folks cheered George Bush when, as governor of Texas, he sent living, thinking human beings to the execution chamber with as much relish and about as easily as he ate hamburgers. These same "life" supporters also rooted for Dubya when he opted for shock, awe and torture in Iraq.

But what of the progressives and their festival of life? The liberals have folded their tents and let their worst enemies have their best word. I'm sorry, liberals, but the word "life" carries a lot more magic than "choice" does.

When I think of choice, I think of consumers looking at menus. When I think of life, I think of energy, reflection, love,

growth, development, compassion and community. Choice takes me to a shopping mall. Finding a bargain or two is fun, but it doesn't measure up to reflection and love.

What we of the original and most honest pro-life movement should be saying is: We are taking back the life force. You guys are hypocrites who forget about the care and welfare of human beings once they are born and can think, feel and ask questions about the meaning of life. You lose interest in them, because they are no longer "pure" and "innocent." But let one of them experience a major trauma to their brain and lose any capacity to think and act—ah, then the "purity" returns and those who want to end their misery become anti-life, crucifying, mean-spirited, absolutely evil Nazis. You guys must hate the fact that human beings have free will; that's why you don't care about executions, people living on the streets, napalmed cities and back-alley abortions. People with free will might commit sins, so let them live in hell.

Let us progressives, liberals, humanists and reasonable thinkers reclaim the banner of life culture by saying, "We are about stopping wars, providing health care, protecting social security, letting women decide about what should happen in and to their own bodies, saving the environment, making sure everyone gets three square and nutritionally worthy meals a day and gets to think and speak for themselves and to let people know that maybe they wouldn't want to live on as a brainless vegetable. Let's reclaim life by making sure every homeless person is offered a home that isn't a prison."

It's time to take on the hypocrites and their deadly message about how real human beings are worthless sinners who deserve prison, punishment and poverty. That's what the crazies stand for, and it has absolutely nothing to do with life.

Stew Albert runs the Yippie Reading Room. His memoir, *Who the Hell is Stew Albert?*, is just out from Red Hen Press. He can be reached at: stewaa@aol.com

Clark Kissinger is a founder of the Not In Our Name antiwar network. This article is excerpted from the *Revolutionary Worker*, rwo.org

This War Won't Stop Itself

BY DAVID SOLNIT

The world is waiting for Americans to show visible resistance and dispel the illusion from the November election that most of us actually support the Bush administration's bloody empire. With notable exceptions, the visible, noisy, confrontational, and disruptive signs of resistance are MIA. Where did all of us anti-warriors go?

"It dawned on me after the election that people are tired of unfocused protests and calls to action with no strategy or concrete goals to work for," says Mike Kress, an Air Force veteran who left as a conscientious objector more than a decade ago and now works with the Spokane Peace and Justice Action League. How do we develop a strategy that can stop the war and occupation of Iraq?

PEOPLE POWER

People power recognizes there is a fragile relationship between those in power and the rest of us. Our compliance forms the pillars on which their power depends. When we withhold our cooperation and organize determined campaigns to assert our power, we can force changes or even remove those who refuse to make them. Three key pillars of the Iraq war and occupation are troops, corporate profiteers, and corporate media disinformation. A people power antiwar strategy means organizing campaigns around these pillars and consciously adopting a big-picture framework.

TROOPS

"If the peace movement organizes and pursues a specific strategy to reduce the recruitment and retention of men and women available for military service, the sustainability of the occupation will reach a tipping point," says Kress. "Students and peace groups across the country are discussing and planning what to do in the event of a draft. In Spokane we are currently planning our strategy as a two-prong campaign, one aimed at recruitable/draftable youth, the other at current military members."

CORPORATIONS

Forcing corporations to withdraw their participation would shut down essential components of the war and occupation. Houston Global Awareness (www.houstonglobalawareness.org) is waging a campaign to get Halliburton out of Iraq and out of profiteering from the occupation, as part of the people power strategy. "Halliburton's operations are essential to the continuing U.S. presence in Iraq and forcing their withdrawal would shut down parts and motives of the U.S. occupation," says their call for a May 18 nonviolent direct action at Halliburton headquarters in Houston during the company's annual shareholder meeting.

MEDIA

As for the media, "this is an information war," said reporter Dahr Jamal (dahrjamiliraq.com) in a recent interview. "Working as an independent journalist in Iraq, I have seen the disinformation from the selling of the war to the public, the invasion and occupation up to the siege of Falluja and the Iraqi elections. If independent media can do their job and tell the story, tell the truth and have photos, proof and eyewitness interviews, and activists are more successful at bringing in more listeners and readers, that will be a better path to ending the occupation than continuing to react to the disinformation and the lies put out by the corporate media and the Bush administration."

To stop the next war, be it in Iran, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela or elsewhere, and to counter the domestic impact of empire, it is essential that we frame our campaigns within their systemic context. In this way our efforts to stop the Iraq war will build momentum towards stopping other wars and injustices and



The Army announced it fell short by 32 percent of meeting its M comes as a grassroots counterrecruiting movement spreads ac tary is one of several ways that ordinary people can make it inc

help us to collaborate with those resisting attacks on Social Security, other critical social programs and basic civil liberties, and immigrant and workers' rights. We can also articulate positive alternatives. For example, if we are opposing oil companies like Chevron Texaco, we can simultaneously advocate alternative fuel/transportation systems and democratic non-corporate institutions to take their place.

We can also learn from the significant recent victory the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (ciw-online.org), winning the demands of their three-year-old Taco Bell boycott on March 8. The Florida farm workers won major increases in wages and forced growers to recognize their organization by asserting "people power" and by organizing as a campaign with achievable milestone goals along the way. This meant building consciousness in their community; creating alliances with students, religious groups, poor people's and immigrant organizations, and global-justice activists; and taking action, from local general strikes to students forcing out 22 campus Taco

Small Talk at 125th & Lenox

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

March 19's "Troops Out Now" demonstration against the Iraq war was far smaller than the throngs of up to 500,000 that turned out for protests in February 2003 and March 2004. Though the crowd – significantly more multiracial than the average antiwar march – stretched for a dozen blocks as it trekked past the brownstones and gospel tabernacles of Harlem and the bodegas and taquerias of East Harlem, by the time it reached the rally site in Central Park, there were only a few thousand people.

That was understandable, as four other protests were competing for the legs of antiwar New Yorkers that day: a trip to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, organized by United for Peace and Justice, and three civil-disobedience actions sponsored by the War Resisters League at military-recruitment centers in Times Square, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. UFPJ refused to endorse the "Troops Out Now" march, citing the difficulty of working with ANSWER, one of its main organizers, and disagreement with ANSWER's call for "support for the Iraqi resistance." Many on the left accuse UFPJ of being too white and middle-class and not militant enough; ANSWER events are more multiracial, but the group also has close ties with the Workers World Party, a Stalinist sect that has defended Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic as anti-imperialist.

"I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING"

Most of the rank-and-file marchers on the street weren't involved in

movement office politics: They just wanted to protest the war. "We've killed 100,000 Iraqis to serve an imperial agenda that's undermined everything that helps people in this country," said Channing Joseph, 24, a recent transplant from New Orleans, as the march paused at 125th Street and Lenox Avenue. "I have to do something. You can't just sit around and let this stuff happen," added Jasmine Halloran, a 25-year-old Philadelphian wearing a sweatshirt from the punk band Anti-Flag.

"I'm against any use of violence," explained Mark Fangmeier, 23, who came on a bus from St. Paul, Minn. "If I sit there in silence, I'm a perpetrator of that violence." He carried a sign with pictures of maimed Iraqi children that read "If You Support Bush, You Support This."

If there's any generalization to be made about why people are against the war, it's that whites were more likely to express pacifist sentiments, while blacks and Latinos almost always brought up the war's effects on inner-city survival. "We're here mostly against

Bush," said Mike Sanchez, 23, of Jersey City. "We have two kids, and he's taking away from education to give tax breaks to the rich." Meanwhile, Carol Brown, a middle-aged woman from the Boston suburbs, fretted that her friends have spent their lives trying to protect their sons from black-on-black violence – "and now George Bush is sending them off to be killed."

March 19's relatively small demonstrations came at a time when many activists are questioning the effectiveness of conventional protest tactics: The Bush chutzpahcrats are not going to suddenly sprout a conscience because a bunch of people pointed at them and chanted, "Shame! Shame!" Voting for a candidate who criticized the war but refused to oppose it obviously didn't work. Large demonstrations can feel like pointless walking in circles. Civil disobedience, touted as a Gandhian spiritual sacrifice to bear witness against evil, often amounts to offering yourself up for arrest for a purely symbolic purpose. And running around breaking bank windows, hyped by some anarchists as the way to be really militant instead of parading obediently like middle-class wussies, usually comes off as politicized juvenile delinquency, as it expresses personal defiance of authority more than it sabotages the war machine.

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

So what would work? Demonstrators' responses ranged from "Start a revolution" (Lisa Changadreja, 16, of Atlanta) to "practice peace in our own lives" (Amy LaSalle, 50, of Arizona). Many feel that most of the American people are against the war, or would be if they knew the facts – "I've been out on causes for years, and I've never gotten a response like this," said Chuck Zlatkin of Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War – but no one has a definitive strategy to build a movement big, powerful, and savvy enough to end the war.

The antiwar movement needs to become more grassroots, con-



arch recruiting goal. The Army's struggles to refill its ranks across the country. Slowing the supply of fresh bodies to the militarily increasingly difficult for imperial elites to continue the war in Iraq.

Bells, a major buyer of the tomatoes they pick.

A final key ingredient in a successful strategy is our ability to frame our own struggles and win the "battle of the story." I look at the conflict between grassroots social movements and empire as a battle of mega-stories that seek to redefine reality. We told the story of the Seattle shutdown; grassroots movements from around the world could confront and check the power and wealth of the World Trade Organization. After Sept. 11, 2001, they told the "War on Terror" story. We told Feb. 15, 2003, millions of people on every continent challenging the U.S. empire's impending invasion of Iraq. Then they told the story of Nov. 2, 2004; the Bush administration fabricated the illusion that most Americans supported its policies of empire and right-wing fundamentalism.

It's our turn now.

David Solnit is the editor of Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World. For more about the People Power Strategy Project, see GlobalJusticeEcologyProject.org/peoplepower

tended Mel, a bespectacled 58-year-old from New Jersey. "Look at who's in the rally and who's not," he observed. "We have to get working-class people and poor people, because they're the ones most egregiously affected." A few blocks down the road, Brenda Pizarro lived out his point, calling out, "Bring my cousin home," from the stoop of a Lexington Avenue housing project. "I want to join. I didn't know about it," she said of the march. "So many people are dying for nothing."

Some argue for media reform, or as Marina Diaz, a Guatemalan-born kindergarten teacher, put it, people need to be taught to become "critical thinkers." That might help in a country where the Bush administration has successfully insinuated that it invaded Iraq to eliminate "terrorism" — while the search for Osama bin Laden is about as big a priority as O.J. Simpson's hunt for "the real killers."

Others are more cynical. Vietnam-era activist Marcia Bernstein, 70, of Brooklyn, said history has shown that Americans will only rise up "when enough American soldiers are killed." "More people will be mobilized, unfortunately, if there is a draft," opined Channing Joseph. "Something drastic has to be done. More than marching in the streets. More than voting. We need to build a movement to match the right wing."

"It's not going to be easy. Look how long it took to end the war in Vietnam," said Scot Roberto, a 45-year-old veteran of the Gulf War. "It's remarkable the way people are organized now compared with the mid-'60s."

On the other hand, by the time the United States finally pulled its ground troops out of Vietnam in 1973 — after nearly a decade of peaceful and violent street protests, antiwar sentiments among all sectors of society, widespread draft resistance, and GIs throwing grenades at their commanding officers — the piles of corpses comprised 58,000 Americans and an estimated 2 million Vietnamese.

Counter-RECRUITING IN THE RED ZONE

By JOHN TARLETON

Debbie Roath's husband is an Army reservist who spent 15 months in Iraq fighting a war that neither of them believed in. Roath, a pastor at a small church in Slater, Missouri, is now leading the effort to bring more information about the military to students at her daughter's high school in the nearby town of Marshall.

"I feel my husband and many, many other soldiers were used for the financial gain of those in power," says the 41-year-old mother of five. "I find a lot of scriptural support that leads me to believe that peace is the better way."

With the military's enlistment numbers dropping and a "counter-recruitment" movement becoming increasingly active in college towns and major urban centers, the battle for the hearts and minds of possible enlistees is spreading to the more conservative parts of the country, where the military draws a substantial amount of recruits. Small-town counter-recruiters like Roath are working on difficult cultural terrain, but the bloody stalemate in Iraq has given them a chance.

Roath and two other peace activists tabled at Marshall High School for the first time on Feb. 25. She said about 50 students approached her. To her surprise, many were critical of the war. She plans to table again in April, and will also try to get counter-recruiting information into the guidance counselor's office.

"They [the students] were very interested in conscientious-objector status and what it's about and how you build a file," Roath said. "We also wanted to get across that the military is not the only way to get college money."

"We asked them to consider if they would be able to kill even if they think they are going in for the money," added Wanita Blumhorst, who tabled with Roath.

AN OLD SOLDIER'S NEW MISSION

Tim Pluta of Mars Hill, North Carolina, asked himself that same question before he was discharged from the Air Force in 1979 as a conscientious objector. Spurred by the Iraq war, he helped start a North Carolina Veterans for Peace chapter that has grown to 67 members. Pluta, 49, has spoken about military life to high students in nearby Asheville and to students at Mars Hill College. He emphasizes that he never tries to tell young people what they should do.

"I started out thinking of myself as doing counter-recruitment and modified my approach to being a military-enlistment educator," Pluta says. "We don't want kids going in for educational benefits and four years of seeing the world, because that's not what it's all about. There are people who come up to us and say, 'This really happens in the military? We didn't know that!' We know some of this material is making an impact."

While Asheville is relatively liberal, Madison County, where Pluta lives in the Smoky Mountains, is fiercely conservative. He plans to table at the county's only high school this spring, and is also raising a ruckus with letters to his hometown paper about plans to bring Junior ROTC into the high school — with taxpayers in a poor county footing half of the estimated \$80,000 bill.

WHERE EVERY DAY IS MILITARY DAY

In Reedley, California, Victoria Benavidez, 18, can't recall a single day she hasn't seen military recruiters at her high school. Located in the deeply conservative Central Valley, Reedley is a poor, predominantly Hispanic town of 20,000 where there are few jobs, and the military is seen as a promising alternative. Career Day at Reedley High draws

few college representatives, but is a magnet for military recruiters who arrive in flashy Hummers and offer students a chance to test their mettle with rock-wall climbing and chin-up contests.

Benavidez helped start Students for Peace at her school two years ago. The group recently decided to focus on counter-recruiting, with an eye toward May 20, when the school hosts its annual Military Day.



GIGI FAJARDO, a senior at Reedley (CA) High School, speaks on the second anniversary of the Iraq invasion about counter-recruiting efforts at her campus.

"It's exciting because this is the first year we're taking action," says Gigi Fajardo, also a senior at Reedley High.

Students for Peace, which has about 15 members, will pass out literature during the week leading up to Military Day and will hold a teach-in at school on May 19. Fajardo says at least one student she knows has already backed out of enlisting after coming to the group for more information.

"A lot of students are quite surprised," she says. "Mainly what gets them is when they find out their recruiter gets more money for each student they get. They feel like they are being used."

Benavidez and Fajardo, both of whom plan to attend college next fall, say that they emphasize to fellow students that it's still possible to find money to go to college without enlisting in the military.

Challenging the military in deeply conservative communities isn't easy. Fajardo says she and her friends are derided as "hippies" by other students at school, while Pluta says he has been "lambasted" by local superpatriots. For Debbie Roath, who denounced the Bush administration for extending her husband's tour of duty twice while trying to cut his hazardous-duty pay, speaking out has left her at times feeling like an "antipatriotic rebel" and has put her at risk of alienating her 45-member congregation.

"The first time you speak out it is a big deal. Then people come to terms with how you feel and are more accepting the next time you speak out," she says. "We've come to understand that we can disagree on some things and still care for one another and love one another."

Her daughter Kelsie, 14, is helping start a student peace group at Marshall High. Meanwhile, Roath hopes to bring a counter-recruiting campaign to Slater, Missouri, an intensely pro-military town of 2,700, where her congregation is located.

"All they are hearing is 'Isn't it great to be a soldier?'," she says. "Once we get our system going here and get a good grounding, then I'll try to recruit someone over there to do the work."

For more, see counterrecruiter.net

MIKE RHODES, FRESNO ALLIANCE

ACTIONS IN BRIEF

CIA RECRUITING DRIVE 'CANNED'

A planned CIA recruiting event at New York University was cancelled after the Campus Antiwar Network (CAN) called a protest demanding the CIA stay away. The event, which was scheduled to include speakers from the CIA, a dinner, and a raffle for prizes such as an iPod Shuffle, was organized by students in an NYU marketing class whose classwork for the semester is to market the CIA to their peers at NYU. They will be graded on their efforts; the CIA, which provided them a \$2500 budget for their project, retains ownership of the marketing campaign they create. The CIA hired the company EdVenture Partners to broker this arrangement.

"We believe they're testing the waters to see how brazenly they can recruit on campuses without encountering student opposition, before spreading programs like this to colleges across the country," said Elizabeth Wrigley-Field, a senior at NYU.

WILLIAM KRISTOL GETS CREAMED

Neoncon bigwig William Kristol was pied March 29 while speaking at Earlham



College in Indiana. Kristol, co-founder of the pro-war Project for a New American Century, was creamed about 30 minutes into his speech when Earlham student Josh Medlin walked onto the stage and approached Kristol with a pie hidden under his coat. Earlham suspended Medlin and he faces further disciplinary review. In another food fight, former Nixon aide and far right presidential candidate Pat Buchanan was doused with salad dressing at Western Michigan University on March 31, the same day as former farmworker leader Cesar Chavez's birth.

NEPAL MAOISTS LAUNCH GENERAL STRIKE TO PROTEST MONARCHIST COUP

For the second time since King Gyanendra launched his coup in early 2005, communist rebels have shut the country down in a nation-wide "bandh," or strike scheduled to last for at least a week. The side-lined parliamentary parties have also agreed in a New Delhi meeting to support the Maoist demand for a constituent assembly to decide the fate of the monarchy.

INDIGENOUS PROTEST COAL IN VENEZUELA

Protesters from the Bari, Yukpa and Wayuu indigenous peoples demonstrated in Caracas, Venezuela on March 31 to demand a halt to coal mining near their homes in the Sierra de Perija mountains. Carrying bows and arrows, protesters demanded that Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez support their campaign against the coal mining that has disrupted their traditional way of life. Their land in western Venezuela has been hit hard by deforestation, and environmentalists claim that coal run off from transportation trucks will pollute waterways. Panapaera, a leader of the protests said, "Here are our bows and arrows, and we will use them against the miners if they come to our lands. And if we have to die fighting for our lands, we will die."

U.S. turns to Hussein-era thugs to fight resistance

Taking a Baath

BY A.K. GUPTA

In devising a strategy to defeat Iraq's insurgents, the Pentagon may be gaining the upper hand but at the cost of pushing Iraq toward civil war. A report by the *Wall Street Journal* from Feb. 16 revealed that "pop-up militias" are proliferating in Iraq. Not only is the U.S. aware of these illegal militias, but the Pentagon is arming, training and funding them for use them in counter-insurgency operations.

Most disturbing, one militia in particular — the "special police commandos" — is being used throughout Iraq and has been singled out by a U.S. general as conducting death squad strikes known as the "Salvador option."

Greg Jaffe, the *Journal* reporter, identified at least six such militias. Yet these militias owe their allegiance not to the Iraqi people or state, but to their self-appointed leaders and associated politicians such as interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Even the commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, Gen. John P. Abizaid, admitted to Congress on March 1 that such militias are "destabilizing."

Of these militias, at least three are linked to Allawi. Jaffe writes, "First came the Muthana Brigade, a unit formed by the order of... Allawi." The second is the Defenders of Khadamiya, referring to a Shiite shrine on the outskirts of Baghdad, which appears to be "closely aligned with prominent Shiite cleric Hussein al Sadr," who ran on Allawi's ticket in the January elections.

The leader of the special police commandos, Gen. Adnan Thavit, participated in the disastrous 1996 coup against Saddam Hussein that Allawi coordinated. Thavit was jailed and subsequently released shortly before the 2003 U.S. invasion. He is also the uncle of Iraq's interim minister of the interior, under which the commandos operate.

NEW BOSS = OLD BOSS

A recent Human Rights Watch study on torture in Iraq noted that Al-Nahdhah, a Iraqi newspaper, reported on June 21 that the interior ministry "appointed a new security adviser to assist in the establishment of a new general security directorate [GSD] modeled on the erstwhile General Security Directorate... one of the agencies of the Saddam Hussein government dissolved by the CPA in May 2003." That security advisor was "Major General 'Adnan Thaber al-Samarra'i." (Like most Arabic words, Thavit's name is translated into English with various spellings.)

Jane's Intelligence Digest commented at the time that the GSD, "will include former members of Saddam Hussein's feared security services, collectively known as the Mukhabarat. These former Ba'athists and Saddam loyalists will be expected to hunt down their colleagues currently organizing the insurgency."

Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, who heads the mammoth U.S. effort to create Iraq's myriad security forces, called the commandos "a horse to back." And Petraeus has done so by providing it with "money to fix up its base and buy vehicles, ammunition, radios and

more weapons."

The special police commandos have also received special treatment from the U.S. occupation. A State Department report to Congress from Jan. 5 noted that at the request of the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, "billeting space" was provided for 1,500 commandos in the Baghdad Public Safety Academy.

BIGGER THAN THE BRITISH

In terms of numbers, a column by David Ignatius in the Feb. 25 *Washington Post* notes that Thavit "commands a force of about 10,000 men," which would make them larger than the British military. The commandos have been used extensively, first last October in the assault on Samarra that was called a "model" for how to retake a city from insurgents (but which is stilled roiled by regular attacks). The commandos have also become a fixture in major cities such as Ramadi and Mosul. In Ramadi, *The Stars and Stripes* describes the commandos as "the Iraqi forces that might soon be responsible for security in the city."

A report in Dec. 25 issue of *The Advisor* — a Pentagon publication with the tagline "Iraq's Official Weekly Command Information Reporter" — stated that the "Special Police Commandos have been deployed all over Iraq to hunt down insurgents."

This "hunt" seems to include death squad operations. Retired Gen. Wayne Downing, the former head of all U.S. special operations forces, appeared on NBC's Today show on Jan. 10 to discuss a *Newsweek* report about the Salvador option. The reference is to the extensive use of death squads by El Salvador's military during its war against the left in the 1980s. Downing called it a "very valid tactic" that has been employed "since we started the war back in March of 2003." Downing added, "We have special police commandos now of the Iraqi forces which conduct these kind of strike operations."

At the highest levels, White House officials consider the special police commandos

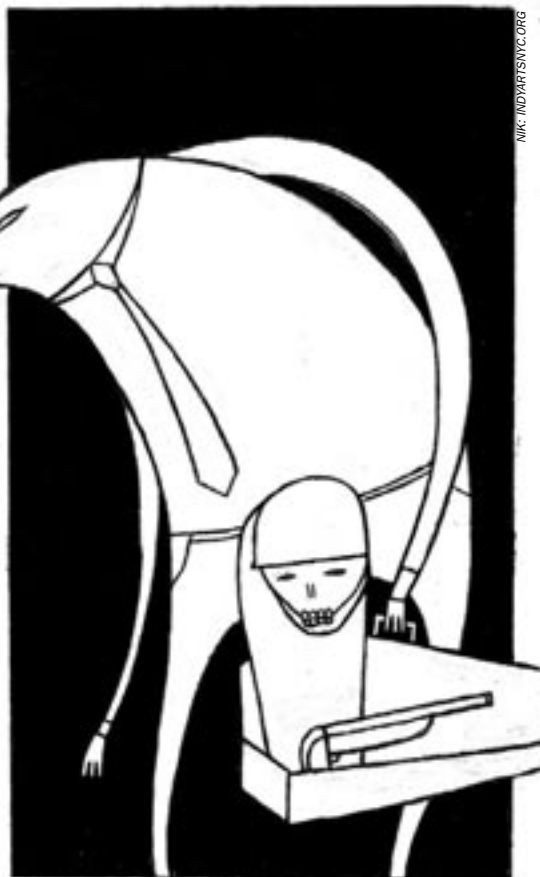
as the leading edge against the insurgency. In hearings before the Senate on Feb. 16, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said the commandos are among "forces that are going to have the greatest leverage on suppressing and eliminating the insurgency."

By all accounts, the insurgency is still very active, conducting up to 60 strikes a day. But one key indicator of its effectiveness — U.S. combat deaths — shows a marked decline since the razing of Fallujah last November. In that month, some 126 U.S. troops died in combat, more than four per day on average. By March, combat deaths had declined by more than 75 percent.

Sweeping countless thousands of Sunni Arab males off the streets has had an effect. The prison population under U.S. control alone has exploded to over 10,000. The insurgents have responded by shifting their targets, concentrating attacks more on Iraqi security forces and they have intensified economic sabotage, crippling the electrical and petroleum infrastructure.

U.S. Marines units have taken the militia strategy to a new level: by creating their own. In a recent sweep through Al Anbar province, the heartland of the insurgency, The 7th Marines Regiment brought with the Iraqi Freedom Guard, a 61-man unit set up in January and paid \$400 a month each, according to a *Reuters* report. During the same operation, Marines of the 23rd Regiment were accompanied by 20 members of a special forces unit called the Freedom Fighters. *The Christian Science Monitor* described them as Shiites from the southern city of Basra, with "little love between them and the Sunni Arab citizens of Anbar."

Despite being squeezed, no one is predicting an end to the insurgency. One U.S. general recently noted that it takes on average nine years to defeat an insurgency. Even if the rebellion is contained to "manageable" levels for the Pentagon, meaning a low rate of combat deaths, that does not mean the resistance will end. U.S. forces long ago lost the battle for hearts and minds.



NICK ANDARTSYNYLOV

Guatemalan Gov Sez: Hafta CAFTA



BY SUSAN CHENELLE

When the Guatemalan government ratified the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) on March 10, the wheels of globalization took a big turn forward. With Guatemala becoming the third country, after El Salvador and Honduras, to approve the agreement, the stage is now set for a ratification battle in the U.S. Congress.

Ignoring protests by thousands of unionists, farmers and students that temporarily shut down Guatemala City and its own initial promise to put the issue to a national referendum, Guatemala's Congress dashed hopes that it might hold out against pressure from the U.S. by signing the agreement. Following the ratification, President Oscar Berger cracked down harshly on protests, deploying 500 soldiers with water cannons, tear gas and trun-

cheons. Two people were killed and many more injured when government troops opened fire on demonstrators in the provincial capitol of Huehuetenango.

Like its big brother the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), CAFTA removes tariffs and other "trade barriers" between the seven signatory countries — Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the United States. Proponents of the agreement argue that the accord will boost exports and productivity, create jobs, and open up new markets.

Factory owners in Guatemala hope the agreement will stem the tide of textile jobs moving to China. However, unions in both North and Central America, well aware of what has happened in Mexico under NAFTA, argue that the competitiveness factory owners seek will come at workers' expense. They "see NAFTA as a warning," says Chris Slevin of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, and fear that CAFTA will likewise "displace farmers, exploit workers, allow corporations to undermine laws and regulations, and end efforts to improve them."

The Guatemalan government is already reaping CAFTA's rewards. On March 24, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced that the U.S. would resume military aid to Guatemala, which had been halted in 1990 when it was learned that Guatemalan soldiers were involved in the death of a U.S. citizen.

Evidence of the greater power corporations will wield over the lives of people under CAFTA has also already surfaced. In early March, before ratifying CAFTA, the

Guatemalan government passed trade rules that superseded those it had enacted in December, which had allowed more production of generic drugs. The Bush administration was concerned that the pharmaceutical industry would not support CAFTA, if the provision had remained in place.

CAFTA's supporters in Washington hope to bring it before Congress for a vote by Memorial Day. However, with opposition coming from not only Congressional representatives concerned about environmental and labor protections, but those whose constituencies will be directly threatened by increased competition in sugar and textiles as well, currently it seems that there are not enough votes to ratify, says Burke Stansbury of the Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador. "They won't bring it to a vote until they think they can win. Our objective is to keep it from coming to a vote."

In anticipation of a drawn-out battle, Bush asked Congress on March 30 for a two-year extension of his authority to negotiate trade agreements under the "fast-track" approval process. Under this protocol Congress is not allowed to amend a trade agreement; it must accept or reject it as-is. The current provision granting him this power expires on July 1.

Congressional hearings on the agreement are scheduled for April 6. Slevin says, "It's our job to make sure members of Congress know what's going on, and that the Bush administration's line — that CAFTA is wanted by Central American countries — is not accurate. The key moment is when a bill is introduced that would implement CAFTA, that's when the clock starts ticking."

BOLIVIA'S GAS WAR HEATS UP

BY JENNIFER WHITNEY

High in the Andes, in the impoverished city of El Alto, history was made in March. Leaders and spokespeople of movements from across the country gathered to relaunch the People's General Staff — a social movement coordinating body established in 2001. Many are antagonists, but have agreed to attempt to work together. As Movement Towards Socialism leader Evo Morales said, "When the right wing, the government, the oligarchy, and the transnationals unite, we are forced to unite as well."

Bolivia is Latin America's poorest country, after Haiti. Though it is rich in natural resources, 70 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. It also has the highest percentage of indigenous peoples of any country in the western hemisphere; 62 percent of its 8.7 million inhabitants belong to one of 37 nations.

Throughout the last 500 years, foreign invaders have stripped the country of its wealth of silver, saltpeter and tin, bankrolling the Spanish empire for centuries and engaging in a war that cost Bolivia its access to the Pacific Ocean.

In recent years, the U.S. "war on drugs" has ravaged the central Chapare region, where coca leaf — from which cocaine can be extracted — has been grown for traditional use for millennia. Currently, transnational corporations export Bolivia's natural gas, getting \$10 back for every dollar invested.

POWERFUL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Much to the chagrin of the contemporary plunderers, however, Bolivia also boasts some of the most vibrant social movements in the region. El Alto's predominantly indigenous Aymara population has become renowned for their road blockades, building occupations, and hunger strikes — tactics that have won them numerous victories against a rabidly neoliberal government.

These movements have reversed the privatization of Cochabamba's water by Bechtel; won the right to continue legally growing coca in the Chapare; rolled back IMF-imposed taxation and slashing of social services; overthrown U.S.-backed president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and forced an agreement from Congress to put him on trial for massacres in the "Gas



War" of October 2003, while demanding that his successor, Carlos Mesa, nationalize the nation's vast gas reserves and begin a participatory process to reform the constitution.

Despite these victories, there have been great divisions, as well as suspicion of the leftist political party, Movement Towards Socialism, led by coca farmer turned parliamentarian Evo Morales. These suspicions reached a peak last year, when Morales endorsed President Mesa's gas referendum, which did not address the principal demand of nationalization. The Aymara of the Altiplano, who called for a boycott of the referendum and who suffered the greatest losses during the "Gas War," remain leery of Morales's relationship with Mesa, and the concessions he has made in an effort to woo the middle class as he gears up for a second bid for the presidency (he lost by just 1.5 percent in 2002).

The catalyst for the historic convergence was a cascade of events. In January, after four months of struggle, residents of El Alto won a promise from the government to terminate its water contract with Aguas del Illimani, a subsidiary of the French corporation Suez. During the same month, the country was paralyzed as people blocked highways to protest price hikes in diesel fuel and gasoline.

Two months later Aguas del Illimani was still operating in El Alto, charging exorbitant rates and showing no signs of leaving.

So members of the Federation of Neighborhood Committees blocked most roads leading from the capital La Paz, situated in a valley below. Meanwhile, in Santa Cruz, bus drivers initiated further protests against fuel price hikes. On March 7, Mesa attempted to resign, blaming Morales and Neighborhood Federation leader Abel Mamani for the crises.

It was a shrewd move, calculated to re-legitimize his administration, which in 17 months has seen around 800 protests. Mesa's supporters took to the streets, and Congress, which was in the midst of lengthy debates over a new gas bill, refused to accept his resignation or call for early elections.

Mesa's strategy backfired: Blockades sealed off seven out of the nine departments (states) in the country, forcing Mesa to apologize publicly to Morales and negotiate with the newly formed coalition.

The day after the People's General Staff signed an agreement formalizing their coalition, a 48-hour general strike was set to begin. That same day, March 16, Congress' lower house passed a new gas law. It fell short of the bare minimum demand by the social movements — that barring nationalization, transnationals pay Bolivia 50 percent of the royalties.

However, Congress did impose an immediate tax increase on the transnationals that would result in up to (U.S.) \$450 million in revenue, less than the amount generated by the Movement Towards Socialism proposal, but a far cry better than the current arrangement.

This bill, just approved by a Senate committee, is a slap in the face to Mesa and the transnationals. (They argue that the gas belongs to them the moment it emerges from underground.) Some members of the People's General Staff have sworn to shut down Parliament if the Senate doesn't pass the bill, and the Movement Towards Socialism will be sending people into the streets to maintain pressure, beginning in mid-April.

Even if the Senate approves the bill, the struggle will continue. As Jaime Solares of the Federation of Bolivian Workers put it, "Faced with the moment the country is going through, we are fighting to make the 50 percent royalty paid by the oil companies a reality. But we are not renouncing the demand for nationalization."

Until that demand is met, the radical alliance in Bolivia will not give up.

Fished to Death: Megaships Plunder Oceans

BY ROBERT OVETZ, Ph.D

Until the mid 20th century, the ocean was a key terrain of conflict between competing colonial powers seeking to expand their control over territories and natural resources.

Today, the ocean is again a renewed place of conflict. This time it is a battle between small-scale subsistence fishermen and the governments and industrial fishing companies to whom their traditional fishing rights have been given away.

These battles, raging from Canada to Chile to Scotland to Taiwan, are the newest round of global resource wars.

Late last year a fish war broke out when Italian fishing boats surrounded and shot out portholes of a Croatian fishing vessel landing their catch at an Italian port. The armed assault was retribution for the Croatian government setting up a "no go" area for foreign vessels, which can dwarf local subsistence vessels and wipe out local fisheries in a matter of years.

These fish wars are flaring out of control. In just the past few months the Sri Lankan Navy has attacked Indian fishing vessels, strikes have rocked India, local subsistence fishermen in the Philippines protested the loss of their traditional access rights to foreign vessels, angry clashes have broken out in Chile and Taiwan, a mutiny hit Papua New Guinea, and Australia has seized and burned illegal fishing vessels.

Just below the surface, a cold war is emerging

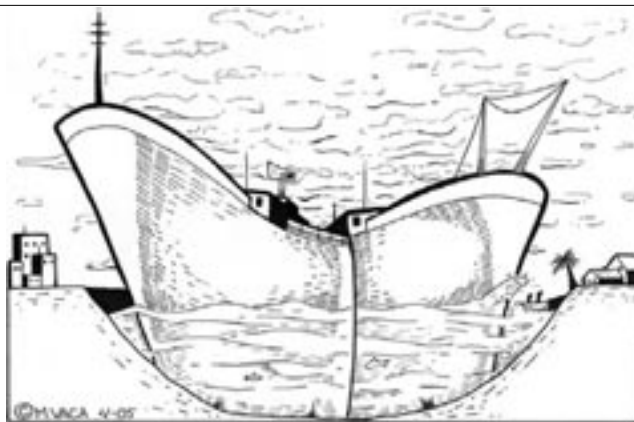
as well. Environmental, recreational and industrial fishing groups have filed countless lawsuits over fishing in the United States. Anger has erupted over the European Union's sweeping changes in its fisheries policies, and a trade war has erupted between the United States and Thailand and Vietnam over America's higher tariffs on imported farmed shrimp.

Long left vulnerable to the vestiges of the global market, the world's fisheries are being rapidly depleted. New developments in industrial fishing over the last few decades have led to a rapid oversupply of super-sized vessels plundering the ocean. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, about 70 percent of our global fisheries are now being fished close to, are already at, or are beyond their capacity.

Flush with subsidies, the growing global industrial fishing fleet is rapidly outstripping the supply of fish. Scientists recently warned that large predatory fish species have been depleted by as much as 99 percent in the past century.

The first to suffer the consequences of the global plunder are ocean wildlife and local subsistence fishermen. "Dirty" fishing gear like longlines — monofilament lines stretching up to 60 miles and baited with thousands of hooks — catch and kill large numbers of non-target catch.

A recent report estimates that longlines catch and kill an estimated 4.4 million sharks, sea turtles, seabirds, billfish and marine mammals in the Pacific each year.



Scientists warn that the endangered Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle, often a victim of longlines, could go extinct in the next five to 30 years unless the technique is eliminated.

Environmentalists and small-scale fishing people have responded with protests, lawsuits and extensive campaigns for reform. Likewise, the recreational fishing industry, itself worth many times more than revenues from industrial fishing, has responded in kind.

Pressed for export revenues to repay mounting debts, developing countries push local subsistence fishing communities out of waters that have sustained their families and local communities for centuries. Access to these waters are then leased to foreign industrial vessels that rapidly deplete the fisheries and move on. Meanwhile, fewer and fewer tourists decide to visit what were once pristine ocean wonderlands.

As Jean Ziegler, a U.N. expert on the right to food, said in a recent report to the Geneva-based U.N. Commission on Human Rights, "In the drive to industrialize, privatize and orient fish production towards exports, poor fishing and fish-farming communities are often left behind."

The consequences are not surprising. Job losses are mounting among coastal fishing communities already hit hard by erosion and climate change. As foreign vessels export fish once destined for local markets, local prices have shot up at the same time global prices have collapsed.

Despite the explosion of conflicts across the globe, the fish wars have yet to make the spotlight. Most resource wars receiving coverage pertain to terrestrial battles over forests, oil and ground water.

Hopefully, this is all about to change. Faced with calls for moratoriums on destructive fishing such as industrial longlines, the U.N. has called for prohibitions of destructive fishing techniques.

Let's hope the United Nations and its member nations will do more than talk. The survival of the ocean, and the people that depend on it for their survival, are at risk.

Robert Ovetz, Ph.D is the Save the Leatherback Campaign Coordinator with the U.S.-based Sea Turtle Restoration Project which is calling for a moratorium on industrial longline fishing in the Pacific.



AT THE U.N.

Annan Under Fire

BY DONALD PANETH

The United Nations has struck an iceberg. It is enormous, and the situation at the U.N. is one of violent flux, an historical, civilizational tragedy.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is at the helm, flanked by Fred Eckhard, his spokesman, and Malcolm Malloch Brown, his Chief of Cabinet. They are peering into the darkness. They sight a ghost ship, laden with past events and once famous names, which first went down April 15, 1912, at latitude 41:16 north and longitude 50:14 west.

With much of its volume concealed beneath the surface, the catastrophe occurred this time at 12 noon on March 29, 2005. It took the form and shape of a second interim report by the Volcker Commission, investigating the U.N.'s Iraq "oil-for-food" program scandal.

The report considered the award in 1998 of the humanitarian goods inspection contract to a Swiss firm, Cotecna Inspection S.A., and dealt with widely-circulated allegations that Annan was subject to a conflict of interest in the award of this contract because his son, Kojo Annan, was employed at the time by Cotecna.

With respect to the Secretary-General, the report said that "there is no evidence" any affirmative or improper influence was exerted in the selection of Cotecna, that Cotecna was awarded the contract on the ground it was the lowest bidder.

However, the report found Annan wanting in a number of aspects of management oversight and procedures.

The situation intensified that same afternoon at 2:45 p.m. when the Secretary-General appeared at an overflow United Nations press conference. Annan made a brief statement, in which he noted his pleasure at being absolved of improperly influencing the Cotecna contract procedure, and then took questions.

The fourth question was blunt and brutal, not at all diplomatic or courteous, as is the custom here. A correspondent asked:

"Are you the man to continue to lead this organization? Critics, not just in Washington but in this very building — some on your own staff — point to Benon Sevan, the man who ran the oil-for-food program; Dileep Nair, mentioned in the report; Ruud Lubbers (resigned head of the U.N. refugees office), sex harassment; Congo, sex, peacekeeping, you were the former peacekeeping director; your former chief of staff shredding documents; plus the decision by senior management on sending people back into Iraq. Do you feel it's time, for the good of the organization, to step down?"

"Hell, no," Annan replied. Moments later, he left the conference room. Malloch Brown took over, distinctly less fluent than usual, his replies sprinkled with uncertain phrases such as "Well, look," "Let me just first say," "Oh, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean ..."

The question of Kojo Annan's activities is continuing to be investigated, and will be among the subjects reviewed in the Commission's final report this summer.

Members are continuing to support Kofi Annan. None is calling for his resignation or dismissal. The United States appears to be going along with him, as a compliant figure who wants to keep his job. In fact, a high-ranking U.N. official observed, "Annan is the best secretary-general the U.S. has ever had."

Beyond the Secretary-General's position and whether or not he will be maintained in it until the end of his term December 31, 2006 lie the broader and deeper troubles of the U.N. and the problems ranging the earth, among them, the upcoming nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference, May 2-27, at U.N. headquarters in New York. Some observers are predicting that the conference will end in a "train wreck." Up to now, the U.S. has blocked the adoption of a conference agenda.

Leslie Cagan, head of United for Peace and Justice, says that 50,000 to 60,000 persons are expected to take part May 1 in a 12 p.m. march past the United Nations and a Central Park rally supporting the treaty.



Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Coup

"As soon as Washington realizes that popular dissent is rising in a country and that regime change is imminent, it immediately begins to seek out new partners among the opposition..."

BY PEPE ESCOBAR

With the same lightning speed with which it materialized, the March 24 Tulip Revolution has disappeared like a comet in the geopolitical cosmos. For four days, Kyrgyzstan had two parliaments. Then on March 28 the new Kyrgyz parliament appointed Kurmanbek Bakiyev as premier and interim president. Actually, Bakiyev had already been confirmed by the previous parliament, which had been elected in 2000 and controlled by now-outstayed president Askar Akayev. The agreement was extraordinary, considering that the Kyrgyz parliamentary elections were rejected as a total fraud by the opposition and the few thousand Tulip revolutionaries who took a few buses, crossed the snowy passes of this Switzerland of Central Asia northward, and forced Akayev to flee to Russia.

It gets curiouser. Bakiyev reneged on all he had said before – when he was forcefully calling for an annulment of the parliamentary elections. Instead, all the key opposition leaders duly supported the new, theoretically fraudulent parliament. This was not exactly a classic revolution in the making.

The romantic whiff of a rebellion of the disfranchised masses against widespread corruption by the elite quickly vanished. Instead, the atmosphere reeked of backroom deals between Moscow and Bishkek.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

There are clear contrasts between Georgia and Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Mikhail Saakashvili in Tbilisi and Viktor Yushchenko in Kiev were keen to integrate their countries into U.S. and European economic and security spheres. And there was a strong anti-Kremlin element to their revolutions as well – although both leaders know they can't afford to alienate the Kremlin. None of these elements were visible in the Tulip Revolution.

Boris Kagarlitsky of the Institute for Globalization Studies in Moscow offers an explanation: "As soon as Washington realizes that popular dissent is rising in a country and that regime change is imminent, it immediately begins to seek out new partners among the opposition... The money invested in the opposition by various NGOs is a sort of insurance policy, ensuring that regime change will not result in a change of course, and that if change is inevitable, it will not be radical."

For Kagarlitsky, the Americans "understand that sometimes leaders have to change for policy to remain the same." Paradoxically, he adds, "Moscow is trying to achieve the very same thing. It fears serious changes in the former Soviet republics more than anything in the world."

IT'S THE ECONOMY, STUPID

Kyrgyzstan, which gained independence in 1991, had the distinction of being the only former Soviet republic in Central Asia controlled by a (relative) democrat. Akayev did introduce multi-party democracy. He also went down the privatization road and followed the IMF's diktats.

In 1998, Kyrgyzstan joined the World Trade Organization. But then Akayev started playing Stalin politically and Suharto economically. The economy became the Akayev clan's economy.

The IMF one-size-fits-all recipe was a disaster. The tiny republic now has the largest debt per capita in Central Asia. This has also meant a massive loss of jobs and next to 60 percent of the population living below the poverty line, according to World Bank figures. Increased poverty led to increased dissent.

At least 700,000 Kyrgyz out of a population of 5 million have been forced to emigrate to find work. Most survive as clandestine slave laborers at construction sites in Russia or Kazakhstan. The stagnant economy revolves around gold mines, hydroelectric equipment and some tourism. The country's external debt – \$2 billion – is equivalent to its gross national product.

The whole arsenal of U.S. foundations – National Endowment for Democracy, International Republic Institute, Eurasia Foundation, Internews, among others – which fueled opposition movements in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine – has also been deployed in Bishkek. Financed by the Americans, a small army of Kyrgyz youngsters went to Kiev to get a glimpse of the Orange Revolution and then became "infected" with the democratic virus.

Practically everything that passes for civil society in Kyrgyzstan is U.S. financed in one form or other. At least 170 NGOs charged with development or promotion of democracy have been created or sponsored by the Americans.

The U.S. State Department has operated its own independent printing house in Bishkek since 2002 – printing at least 60 different titles, including a bunch of fiery opposition newspapers. USAID invested at least \$2 million prior to the Kyrgyz elections – quite something in a country where the average salary is \$30 a month.

Opposition leader Roza Otunbaeva has recognized publicly that "yes, we are supported by the U.S." The investment will have paid off if a "democratic revolution" can be sold worldwide as the sterling example of a country with a Muslim majority joining the Bush crusade.

But the new leaders may be up for a rude awakening. The Russian daily *Nazavisimaya Gazeta* has stressed "a backward step of 20 years" in Kyrgyzstan, abysmal economic degradation, and thus the possibility of "a new wave of instability and disorder. Without solving the old problems, the new leaders already have many enemies among the disenfranchised."

Excerpted from *Asia Times*, atimes.org

ISRAEL'S BAD KARMA

The Settler Problem

BY YONI MISHAL

In 1996, peace among Israelis and Palestinians seemed close at hand. I was a student at the University of Haifa. My Talmud teacher, Dr. Anat Taran, told us that some people in Israel see themselves as followers of the "Kanaim," a Jewish group that existed 2,000 years ago.

Historically, the Kanaim have been blamed for the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in the year 73 AD. According to the story, the Kanaim set fire to the granaries that would allow the Jewish army to withstand a long siege.

God should have come to save them, then and there. That's what the Kanaim believed, and that's why they burned down the only chance for Jerusalem to survive a long war with the Romans.

Dr. Taran told us that she knew members of the group who live in the Occupied Territories. It was hard for her to believe that anyone would willingly follow a path of self-destruction.

A few weeks ago, I took part in a protest at a Gaza Strip entrance, where settlers pass through a fortified road on their way to their homes. The idea of a group of fanatics living in what is considered by them as their country, was not strange to me one bit now, almost 10 years later. I have come to understand that it's not the people and their idea that are strange or crazy, but the country they – or we – live in.

The withdrawal from Gaza has turned politics upside down in Israel.

Ariel Sharon, an indicted war criminal, has become the Left's best friend, and the settlers have become his enemies, letting go of his hand after 25 years of strong partnership. Have the tables turned? Has Sharon finally understood that death and destruction is a dead end and that peace is the only way?

No. Sharon after all is only relinquishing puny settlements in the tiny sliver of Gaza in exchange for expanding the massive settlements that dominate the West Bank.

The settlers, loyal to their heritage, have decided to take everybody down with them, just as the Kanaim did 2,000 years ago. They are blocking main transportation routes, and threatening to assassinate Ariel Sharon and shoot soldiers sent to evacuate them. They are harassing Palestinians more than ever.

What is the left and the majority of people doing in response? Nothing much. Most people just sit back and enjoy the show, not realizing the horror it presents. "Look at the settlers give themselves bad publicity," they say. A well-known writer in Haaretz stated, "Dear settlers, don't stop your riots at the gates of Tel Aviv. Please come in and ruin any trace of sympathy for you have left here."

Here's the catch: the settlers don't care about publicity or sympathy or ratings. For the last 30 years they didn't play by the rules and they don't plan to start now. For them, it's a final war. As one settler said, "This is all too bad, since the [Israeli Defense Force] will have to go back into Gaza in a short while, for the Messiah to come. And then it will cost more soldiers. So what for?"

But I'll tell you what really is too bad. For 2,000 years, Jews lived all over the world and created an immensely rich culture. In the last 57 years, since the foundation of Israel, that culture has been drawn into an offense against itself. A small group of Jews, just like the Kanaim, want to burn down any chance of peace.

I fear the worst. Next time I meet a settler, it will be when I come to evacuate them as a reserve soldier. My strong Jewish identity, my assault rifle, and my gear may not help me in face of people who have nothing to lose.

I can only hope history has taught us better, and that the Israeli people will see through the smoke Sharon has stirred up with the help of his once trusted followers, the settlers. It has obscured the anti-social budget Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu are quietly passing, or the plan to build 3,000 houses in the remaining territories that just passed. All signs show the right-wing plan remains totally intact.

A Signifying Junkie Returns to the Source



Basquiat Retrospective
Brooklyn Museum
Now through June 5

Jean-Michel Basquiat's life has all the makings of a VH1 *Behind the Music* special. Rumor has it, Julian Schnabel even made a pretty good one. A brilliant ghetto child slums through the hothouse of New York's art scene in the 1980s. Discovered, he showcases in Mary Boone's gallery and then across Europe by the time he is in his mid-20s. Before he reaches the sun, the wings of this young Icarus are cut. He dies of a drug overdose at the age of 27.

Morality tales aside, Basquiat's work resists kitsch. Indeed, the retrospective of his paintings currently on display at the Brooklyn Museum confirms Basquiat as one of the last great painters of the 20th century. His art worked through the crafting of intense contradictions with an overarching simplicity. His oilstick and acrylic figurative drawings suggest an almost fragile one-dimensionality while simultaneously glimpsing the inner view of his subjects. The painting *Untitled (Head)* is a skull marked by dozens of scars and downward cast eyes representing the bruised ego. The viewer is both repulsed and attracted to this figure, like Frankenstein's monster, so much like us it's scary.

The crown tag and surrealist writing characteristic of his painting and constructions speaks to the influence of graffiti in Basquiat's work. But unlike subway bombers and political artists such as Glenn Ligon and Adrian Piper, Basquiat rejects didacticism. By crossing out text and repeating words, Basquiat fucks with meaning in a unique signifying style that constantly works against itself, a synecopated contretemps.

His personal intersection as Afro-Caribbean smacked into 80s Soho positions the tension in the retrospective between originality and appropriation. The Brooklyn's cura-



tors see Basquiat as appropriating Modern art, particularly Picasso. True, Picasso and Basquiat neatly bookend 20th century painting, especially in regards to the influence of the West African aesthetic. But where Picasso came to West African art through the "opening" of Africa by French imperialism, Basquiat engaged in an organic process Amílcar Cabral called "returning to the source."

In Basquiat's beautification, or "crowning," of historical black figures like Charlie Parker and Joe Lewis, there's a clear nod to the Haitian Loa replacement of Catholic saints with Yoruba gods. Basquiat's paintings are devoid of the militant markers found in the earlier Black Arts Movement. Less an apolitical poser, Basquiat created a coded resistance by "pulling the wool over



GOLD GRIOT, 1984;
Jean-Michel Basquiat painting in his New York studio.

master's eyes," as seen in *Natives Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari*.

As a black man in a mighty white art establishment, he played Elegba, the trickster, canvassing a space of contemplation and playfulness by polyglotting Voodoo, Santería, rap, jazz, blues and the street corner. Basquiat is both blacker-than-thou and easy for a global audience.

The Brooklyn Museum retrospective is another hit from its gambling curators. To see Basquiat juxtaposed with the vast collection of African art he had visited as a youth underscores the principles of Sankofa. "We must look to the past to understand the present and prepare for the future."

—KAZEMBE BULAGONG

NAZI SALUTE: *The Downfall*: A Subtle Revisionism on Hitler's Final Days

BOCHUM, GERMANY—While Europe prepares to celebrate the 60th anniversary of its liberation from Nazi tyranny, German moviegoers are indulging in a very different form of nostalgia.

The Downfall (*Der Untergang*), Oliver Hirschbiegel's highly acclaimed new film set in April 1945 in Hitler's bunker, is constructed around the emotional needs of modern German audiences, not upon the empirical evidence of history. While the acting is excellent, neither the script nor the direction are emotionally or psychologically credible. Nothing is filmed that might appear ugly to anyone who idealizes Hitler and the other major Nazi personalities.

Each character is measured morally according to whether or not he or she betrays Hitler during his downfall. We never actually see anything gory or ugly regarding any SS Officer or Nazi Party member. Even their betrayals are somehow laudatory. The blood and guts we do get to see are always of anonymous soldiers of Germany's regular army

who, by the standards of today's German audience, appear very unattractive, even downright grubby and ugly. The beautiful Nazis remain beautiful, even in death.

In one scene, a blond-haired, blue-eyed Hitler Youth breaks down in tears as the Russians invade Berlin and he returns to his father, a disaffected veteran who had lectured a group of Hitler Youth manning a flack gun about the futility of continuing the war. Had the director cared a jot about historical accuracy, he would have had the kids shoot the father dead on the spot for traitorous rhetoric. Instead, a Hitler Youth is filmed as

What was the end of the Third Reich really like? Save the money on a movie ticket, go to a used-book store and get a copy of "Führerbunker" by the poet W.D. Snodgrass. Snodgrass's dramatic monologues achieve what *The Downfall* purports to, the laying bare of the psyches of the major Nazi personalities during the Reich's downfall. —DQ

THE DOWNFALL

dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel

repentant, making him sympathetic to octogenarian German viewers, many of whom were themselves part of what the historian Götz Aly calls the Nazi Youth Revolution.

The film is told largely from the perspective of Traudi Junge, Hitler's young secretary, who makes numerous facial expressions exclusively for the camera, Brecht style, to demonstrate to the audience her ironic distance from the insane amorality she's forced to witness in the Bunker. We also listen in on Eva Braun's confession to Junge that, when Hitler wasn't looking, she'd sometimes kick his beloved German Shepherd under the dinner table, a confession meant to make Eva Braun sympathetic, as if she'd manifest some sort of private resistance to the Führer for over a decade from the depths of a privately held sanctum of personal freedom, as if

we the audience are supposed to cheer Hitler's new bride, "you go, girl!" as she marks a testament to the Human Will to resist tyranny under the dinner table.

Hirschbiegel does not appear to understand the social-psychology of the Cult of Death that the Nazis had concocted, nor does he dare to depict the orgiastic atmosphere of Hitler's Bunker. Nothing in the film is pornographic, yet porn was the primary aesthetic value of the Nazis. Everywhere you turn in Nazi propaganda, the pornographically excessive is there, sticking the pink parts in your face. There are a few hints of sex-as-death and death-as-sex, but they are muted, again, because the director clearly wishes to preserve Hitler's mystique, his aura, and engage the newfound nostalgia many Germans feel for their former dictator.

Loyalty to that vision is the final message of the movie. Now that the American Third Way between Nazism and Communism is viewed by many Germans as pure hypocrisy and Israel as a sick Zionist joke, what's left?

The Downfall opened April 1 at the Film Forum and Kew Gardens Cinemas.

—DERQ QUIGGLE

WORKING WOMEN TAKE ON WAL-MART

SELLING WOMEN SHORT

By Liza Featherstone
Basic Books

Republican, Christian, low-waged and facing sexual discrimination as a Wal-Mart employee, Deborah Gunter bucked conservative notions of womanhood. Along with six other women, Gunter initiated a class action lawsuit against the retail giant. In *Selling Women Short*, author Liza Featherstone chronicles *Dukes v. Wal-Mart Stores Inc.*, the largest sexual harassment case in history.

Featherstone details not just the "cretinous, knuckle-dragging harassment" that provoked the suit, but also the discrimination hidden in the numbers and company culture. On hearing of her marital problems, Gunter's boss said, "Why don't you put your face in my lap and take care of both of our problems." Gunter's hours were reduced after complaining. A male district manager in Indiana held

